

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SANTIAGO 6140

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TAGS: CI, PINT, PINS

SUBJ: JUNTA CLOSES "TRIBUNA"

1. MILITARY JUNTA HAS "SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY" PUBLICATION OF FAR-RIGHT DAILY TRIBUNA. IN STATEMENT ACCOMPANYING CLOSURE RESOLUTION GOVT ASSERTS MOVE DICTATED BY ITS CONCERN FOR "JOURNALISTIC ETHICS AND PUBLIC TRANQUILITY" AND ARGUES THAT CLOSURE DICTATED BY TRIBUNA'S PUBLICATION "IN HIGHLIGHTED FORM OF FALSE INFORMATION INVOLVING MILITARY AUTHORITIES." STATEMENT ALSO NOTES THAT TRIBUNA HAD NOT HEEDED PREVIOUS GOVT WARNINGS.

2. DIRECT IMPETUS FOR CLOSURE COMES FROM SERIES OF TRIBUNA HEADLINES AND STORES IN DEC 11, 12, AND 13 ISSUES. DEC 11 ISSUE HEADLINED

"ALTAMIRANO HAS FALLEN" REFERRING TO MUCH SEARCHED-AFTER SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER CARLOS ALTAMIRANO. TEXT CONTENDED THAT ALTAMIRANO HAD GIVEN SELF UP TO MILITARY TO RECEIVE TREATMENT FOR A BAD CASE OF STOMACH ULCERS. AFTER WEDNESDAY'S STORY AND HEADLINE ON SAME THEME, TRIBUNA WAS WARNED TO STOP PUBLISHING ALARMIST NEWS. THURSDAY'S ASSERTION THAT HE WAS ACTUALLY UNDER CUSTODY IN THE MILITARY HOSPITAL APPARENTLY PROVED TO BE THE ICING ON THE CAKE AND PROMPTED THE CLOSING.

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3. RUMORS ABOUT ALTAMIRANO'S CAPTURE HAVE BEEN STANDARD FARE

IN SANTIAGO FOR WEEKS, AND THE PARTICULAR VERSION CONCERNING HIS HOSPITALIZATION HAS BEEN KNOWN, BUT NOT USED, BY MANY EDITORS OF LOCAL PRESS FOR SOME TIME. STORY ORIGINALLY BROKEN BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHILE'S CHANNEL 9, BUT IGNORED BY OTHER MEDIA WHO STILL SMARTING OVER GOVT REBUKES FOR MISHANDLING FALSE REPORTS ALLEGING DANIEL VERGARA'S DEATH (SANTIAGO 6086). TRIBUNA, HOWEVER, PICKED UP RUMOR AND RAN WITH IT CAUSING MILITARY IRE.

4. COMMENT. POSSIBILITY OF COURSE EXISTS THAT TRIBUNA'S ARTICLES MIGHT BE TOO CLOSE TO TRUTH FOR AUTHORITIES. HOWEVER, LIKELIHOOD IS GREATER THAT JUNTA SIMPLY FED UP WITH ALARMIST AND DISTORTED REPORTING WHICH TRIBUNA TRADEMARK. NEWSPAPER'S CONTINUED ATTACK ON SOME NON-UP FIGURES AND IN PARTICULAR ON CARDINAL SILVA AND OTHER CHURCH PERSONALITIES NOT IN LINE WITH JUNTA'S STATED GOAL OF CALMING NATION'S POLITICAL PASSIONS.
THOMPSON

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